

COLUMN/TITLE/HEADLINE: Greenrealestate™

People don't just live in homes. People live in communities, and right now communities are concerned about the planet. More than ever before, there is a rising awareness of how environmental issues affect every aspect of our lives. How we work, how we play, and even where we live all have an impact on the planet, and people are increasingly interested in how they can make a difference in reducing their impact on the environment. This presents a great opportunity for realtors and brokers to help bring about greener communities, and improve communities while improving their business at the same time.

The non-profit National Association of Green Agents and Brokers (NAGAB) was formed in 2007 with the aim of educating real estate professionals in how to reduce the environmental impact of housing by reducing green house gas emissions and increasing home energy conservation. Since its formation, over 1,000 realtors across Canada have taken its courses, and it has over 16,000 affiliate members. NAGAB offers a range of courses (approved by the Real Estate Council of Ontario for continuing education credits), representing an opportunity for agents at all levels of experience to develop their skills in this emerging facet of the marketplace.

Phil Soper, president and CEO of Royal LePage Real Estate Services, has seen the impact that environmental awareness can have on business. Royal LePage is a founding partner in NAGAB, and has over 500 realtors registered for NAGAB certification. "Our partnership with NAGAB allows us to service a growing segment of the real estate market. This program educates and empowers our realtors and brokers, as well as consumers on how to make eco-friendly decisions when it comes to the home," says Soper.

As people realize how important it is to reduce their ecological footprint, it becomes vital for realtors to be aware of how energy-inefficient much of Canada's older housing stock is. Whether it's through retrofitting houses simply to increase efficiency and reduce energy costs, or sprucing up an older home for sale, there are significant and immediate benefits to going green. By using more efficient fixtures, appliances, and plumbing, owners can save on utility costs – a welcome opportunity in a time when energy prices are unstable. As well, updating a home's energy efficiency can add up to five percent to its value, something of interest to sellers as well as buyers. "When considering a particular home it's important for buyers to know the energy-efficient features that keep home operating costs down and the conservation opportunities that will improve their home comfort. Conversely, sellers want to know what energy and cost-saving features buyers will value and what energy-efficiency upgrades can improve resale marketability," says Soper.

Brock Tupper, sales representative at Linda Davies Real Estate, has seen how NAGAB certification has enhanced his ability to do business. Linda Davies Real Estate is the first brokerage in Canada to be fully NAGAB certified, and is currently brokering the Strata condominium development in Burlington, which aims to be the first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED, a rating system which evaluates the sustainability of buildings according to guidelines established by the non-profit United States Green Building Council) certified condo in the area. "We've definitely had a very positive client reaction," says Tupper. "People understand that there are other benefits in addition to helping the planet – there's personal health, a cleaner immediate living environment, and secondary cost savings from living in green buildings. With the heating and cooling features in Strata, there will be a projected savings of 77% in those utility costs."

The skills NAGAB teaches promise to become much more important as home buyers become more interested and aware of how their housing impacts the environment. “Royal LePage’s Eco-Home Survey in October 2007 found that 72 per cent of Canadians will look for a green-improved property in their next home purchase, and 63 per cent are willing to pay more for an environmentally friendly home,” says Soper. With environmental concerns ranking high, Realtors with a means of educating consumers in the details of what it means to have a green home allows them to be powerful change agents.

FOOTER <ITALICS>: For more information about the National Association of Green Agents and Brokers, please visit www.nagab.org online.

Elden Freeman B.A. , M.E.S, Broker (photo attached) is the founder & Executive Director of the Non-profit, National Association of Green Agents and Brokers (NAGAB). Elden cares passionately about the environment and practices what he preaches, powering his house with Solar panels, driving an eco friendly Toyota Yaris and biking when possible. Elden believes that realtors across Canada can play an important role in educating their clients on increasing energy efficiency and reducing Greenhouse gas emissions. For more information about the National Association of Green Agents and Brokers, please visit www.nagab.org online, call 416 536 7325 or e mail elden@nagab.org.